

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

DIPLOMATIC SECURITY INVESTIGATES



DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

INVESTIGATES

Introduction

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) is the law enforcement and security arm of the United States Department of State. As a federal law enforcement agency, Diplomatic Security is unique. **Special agents are posted in 30 U.S. cities and more than 160 foreign nations — by far the most geographically widespread U.S. federal law enforcement organization.**

Through its unique overseas presence, DS has developed strong partnerships with foreign and multinational law enforcement and security organizations. These relationships allow Diplomatic Security to assist federal, state, and local government law enforcement agencies with investigations of certain transnational crimes that violate the laws of the United States, regardless of where they are committed.

Investigating Passport Fraud

One of DS’s highest priorities is the investigation of travel document fraud, a serious and growing threat to the national security of the United States. Criminals who obtain a fraudulent travel document often use it to commit other crimes, including terrorism, financial fraud, narcotics trafficking, alien smuggling, and identity theft. Fugitives often seek to change their identities and travel internationally as part of their criminal activities and efforts to evade prosecution.

DS special agents have conducted international document fraud investigations for more than 80 years. They have the authority to make arrests for a number of violations of federal code, including 18 USC 1542 and 18 USC 1546 for passport and visa fraud—both federal felonies—and other criminal acts committed in conjunction with travel document fraud. These investigations are critical to America’s security.

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Bureau of Diplomatic Security Command Center

A U.S. passport is the most valuable identity document in the world. It allows the bearer unlimited access to the United States and many other countries in the world—often without a visa. Diplomatic Security investigates the fraudulent issuance, acquisition, and use of U.S. passports.

Domestically, DS special agents conduct criminal investigations from eight major field offices (Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.) and 22 smaller resident offices throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Agents from these offices work closely with local, state, tribal, and other federal authorities on a wide range of investigations.

DS works closely with the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs to protect the integrity of visa and passport issuance processes. All DS field and resident offices have close working relationships with local passport agencies, often co-locating to facilitate this cooperation and the exchange of information about current fraud trends and imminent threats.

DS special agents also participate in two significant national task force programs, the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) and the Document and Benefit Fraud Task Forces (DBFTFs). The JTTFs under the U.S. Department of Justice assist in information-sharing and criminal investigations regarding possible domestic and international terrorist activities. The DBFTFs are multi-agency criminal investigative teams overseen by the Department of Homeland Security that focus on use of fraudulent documents to steal from federal, state, and local benefit programs intended for qualified U.S. citizens.

DS special agents contribute critical support to both vital programs, based on their investigative expertise and the DS information-sharing network worldwide.



Combatting Passport and Visa Fraud

Many people attempt to obtain U.S. passports and visas illegally each year. Special agents investigate and coordinate visa and passport fraud cases with both domestic and international aspects, including the fraudulent issuance, procurement, counterfeiting, and forgery of these documents. Cases may involve **illegal document vendors, alien smuggling, or allegations of malfeasance by staff serving at U.S. embassies abroad.** DS has investigated thousands of individuals who attempted to obtain fraudulent visas on U.S. passports to advance transnational criminal enterprises through criminal organizations or bribery, and also has investigated passport applications identified by passport agencies as possibly indicating fraud.

To augment its international investigative capacity, DS has established 105 criminal investigator positions at U.S. diplomatic missions overseas to investigate suspected visa and passport fraud. Working with U.S. Consular Affairs personnel at American embassies and consulates and with host-nation law enforcement partners, the Assistant Regional Security Officer-Investigator (ARSO-I) program has achieved impressive results. The program has trained thousands of foreign law enforcement and airline personnel in document fraud investigative techniques; developed information that led to the revocation or denial of over 23,000 visas; and conducted investigations that resulted in 6,400 arrests by foreign law enforcement on visa and passport fraud charges.





A U.S. Consulate General Assistant Regional Security Officer-Investigator (standing at left) discusses document fraud trends with a group of foreign border security officials during a Diplomatic Security training event overseas.

DS also has provided document fraud identification training and fraud trend presentations throughout the world for thousands of U.S. diplomatic mission personnel, foreign law enforcement, and airline officials. The far-reaching relationships built by DS special agents serving globally are a key asset that DS brings to its federal, state, and local partners—an asset unavailable through any other U.S. law enforcement agency.

Counterterrorism

DS special agents are assigned to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces in 30 cities throughout the United States.

Through these task forces, DS works with state, local, tribal, and other federal law enforcement organizations to investigate individuals and organizations planning or committing terrorist acts at home and abroad. These joint investigative efforts help prevent, deter, and neutralize terrorist incidents and apprehend individuals involved in such crimes.

DS special agents detailed to these task forces plan, coordinate, and conduct extremely complex and sensitive investigations involving terrorist activities, threats, and incidents directed against United States citizens, U.S. government personnel, and diplomatic facilities. They also monitor and interpret sensitive intelligence in an effort to corroborate, develop, and expand information regarding threats against diplomatic personnel and facilities throughout the world.

Through its Office of Protective Intelligence Investigations, DS also investigates hundreds of threats, suspicious activities, and terrorist incidents directed against a wide variety of people and facilities to which DS has a protective nexus, including the U.S. Secretary of State, domestic and international Department of State facilities, and the staff and facilities of international organizations and foreign diplomatic missions in the United States.



Thanks to excellent investigative preparations by DS in cooperation with fellow federal law enforcement agencies, special events like the U.S. presidential inauguration parade are usually incident-free.

Here, a DS Special Agent provides security for the foreign diplomatic corps.

At major international events, such as the annual U.N. General Assembly in New York and the U.S. presidential inauguration, DS deploys special agents and support personnel to investigate suspicious activities and potential threats against its highest profile protectees, and to coordinate the flow of intelligence and law enforcement information throughout an inter-agency network.

DS shares threat information with other federal and local agencies, as well as international partners, to ensure that every threat is thoroughly investigated and appropriate countermeasures are taken.

Counterintelligence

The DS Counterintelligence Division conducts aggressive counterintelligence inquiries and counterespionage investigations with other U.S. government agencies. These investigations are conducted in close coordination with the FBI, often combining the FBI's far-reaching statutory investigative authorities with Diplomatic Security's broad overseas security infrastructure.

DS's counterintelligence program is designed to detect, deter, investigate, and neutralize the efforts of foreign intelligence services targeting the personnel, information, and facilities of the Department of State and the U.S. foreign affairs community worldwide. DS also is a leader in establishing and running major human counterintelligence programs to protect sensitive government construction programs in hostile intelligence environments.

Tracking Fugitives

Assigned to U.S. embassies around the world, DS special agents known as Regional Security Officers (RSOs) work with host-nation police to pursue investigative leads on fugitives wanted in the United States for a variety of crimes.

DS often is the agency other law enforcement organizations turn to for help in locating fugitives who have fled to foreign nations.



The DS Regional Security Officer for U.S. Embassy Rio de Janeiro (center) introduces “America’s Most Wanted” TV host John Walsh (left) to Brazil’s senior police inspector who cooperated in locating a U.S. criminal fugitive in that country.

DS has assisted the U.S. Marshals Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Drug Enforcement Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, all branches of the U.S. military, and several state and local law enforcement agencies. DS was responsible for more than ten percent of all intercontinental fugitive returns by the U.S. Marshals Service during fiscal year 2012.

As a result of its close working relationship with foreign police, Diplomatic Security has successfully located fugitives all over the world, including

- ◉ Senior members of Colombia’s Medellin drug cartel
- ◉ Suspects wanted for sexual assault of minors
- ◉ Fugitives featured on the *America’s Most Wanted* television program
- ◉ Suspects wanted for homicide
- ◉ Individuals considered “Top 10” fugitives by the wanting agency

DS also has located and helped return to justice in the United States fugitives wanted on charges of desertion, hijacking, child pornography, parental child abduction, money laundering, burglary, and violent sexual assault.

DS also has assisted in the location and return of children who were abducted by a parent without custodial rights.

With the passage of the Prosecuting Remedies and Tools Against the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act in 2003, which makes it a crime for United States citizens to sexually exploit or abuse children in a foreign country, Diplomatic Security’s investigative assistance is in greater demand as U.S. law enforcement seeks to apprehend pedophiles from the United States who prey on children around the globe.

Investigation of Misconduct and Violent Crimes

Diplomatic Security's Special Investigations Division (SID) is responsible for investigating allegations of criminal and administrative misconduct involving Department of State employees, dependents, contractors, and other U.S. government personnel under Chief of Mission authority overseas. SID also conducts administrative and criminal investigations involving State Department employees, contractors, and other U.S. government detailees domestically when there is a connection to Department operations in the United States.

SID investigates alleged criminal and administrative misconduct by employees such as acts of workplace violence, unauthorized disclosure and compromise of classified or sensitive information, substance abuse, employee theft, acts of fraud, and misuse of U.S. government computer systems. SID also conducts investigations of crimes committed by and against executive branch employees, contractors, and dependents, as well as crimes occurring within U.S. diplomatic installations and housing abroad.

SID cooperates with federal, state, and local law enforcement agency colleagues on a wide range of investigative efforts. Criminal investigations are coordinated through the U.S. Department of Justice and the appropriate United States Attorney's Office.

Cyber Crimes

The DS Computer Investigations and Forensics Division enables DS investigators to confront the dramatic increase in crimes involving computers and other electronic technologies affecting the U.S. Department of State. This highly skilled staff is specially trained and equipped to execute search warrants worldwide on electronic devices and storage media. They provide criminal, administrative, and other investigators with a variety of services and resources, including assistance with any computer-related incident with a criminal component such as document fraud and child pornography.



A DS Computer Investigations and Forensics technician assists investigators with technology services necessary to combat a variety of crimes.

RETURNING A FUGITIVE TO FACE JUSTICE

A Nigerian national was wanted in the United States for conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud, as well as money-laundering schemes. Monetary losses to his victims exceeded \$70 million. DS RSOs in Lagos worked successfully with the U.S. Department of Justice and other U.S. and Nigerian law enforcement agencies to return the Nigerian fugitive to the United States, where he was arrested and turned over to the U.S. judicial process.

CURBING FRAUDULENT ASYLUM CLAIMS

Over a four-year period, Chinese asylum claims doubled in the United States to 16,000 cases per year. During the same period, Chinese student visa asylum requests jumped from ten percent of all claims to 33 percent.

To confront potential fraud and improve investigative collaboration, the DS Regional Security Office in Shenyang and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security co-founded the China Visa Working Group, with key partnership by other U.S. law enforcement agencies as well. Following the Group's success in identifying fraudulent claims, Chinese student visa asylum claims dropped 63 percent, demonstrating the importance of the program and the need for active inter-agency collaboration.

PREVENTING INTERNATIONAL VISA FRAUD

A suspect was involved in a visa fraud scheme in the Massachusetts area regarding issuance of legitimate work visas based on fraudulent documentation presented to a U.S. embassy in South America. The suspect charged individuals \$15,000 to facilitate the issuance of a visa. Upon their arrival in the United States, there was no expectation that these individuals would work at the company sponsoring their visas or that they would leave the U.S. after the authorized period of stay had ended.

The investigation lasted over two years and involved DS working together with members of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Foreign Service National Investigators employed by the U.S. embassy, and foreign law enforcement officers operating undercover. This complex visa conspiracy investigation led to the arrest of a recruiter and the identification of several companies that manipulated the work visa process to provide businesses with an illegal work force. The investigation showed that the scheme facilitated the entry of over 1,000 foreign nationals into the United States.

All five suspects were arrested and subsequently pled guilty or were convicted by a jury. Each received 18 to 30 months of prison time, and all were ordered removed from the United States.

CURTAILING GANG ACTIVITY

Operation Bloodhound, a large multi-agency investigation, targeted a violent nationwide street gang involved in narcotics, weapon trafficking, homicides, and kidnappings. The gang used passport and identity fraud to further their activities and to avoid prosecution or capture. DS special agents from several field offices presided over 23 arrests in Illinois on one day alone, and seized multiple vehicles, narcotics, and cash. Several of the gang members were sentenced to prison.

HALTING THE SMUGGLING OF PEOPLE AND NARCOTICS

Operation Dancing Brides was a joint federal investigation into a criminal enterprise that employed Eastern European females as exotic dancers. The women entered the United States on student visas and often ended up in Mafia-connected adult entertainment jobs or in sham marriages with U.S. citizens to obtain immigration benefits. The two-year investigation culminated in 31 arrests.

Legal Authorities

The Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 established the Diplomatic Security Service. The State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, Section 37 (22 United States Code Section 2709), authorizes Diplomatic Security special agents to:

- Conduct investigations concerning illegal passport or visa issuance or use
- Provide protection and perform protective functions relating to the security and safety of
 - heads of a foreign state, official representatives of a foreign government, and other distinguished visitors while in the United States
 - the Secretary of State, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and other official representatives of the U.S. government, in the United States or abroad
- Carry firearms, execute federal arrest and search warrants, and serve summonses and subpoenas

In 2002, Congress expanded the arrest authority of DS special agents to include federal offenses committed in their presence or any federal felony.

Contact Us

To request investigative assistance, contact the Diplomatic Security Command Center in Washington, D.C., or one of the field offices located throughout the United States.

Diplomatic Security Command Center:

1-866-217-2089 (*Staffed 24 hours daily*)

Visit us online at: www.diplomaticsecurity.state.gov

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